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A Townsend's Solitaire in Berkeley

All winter long the two large pepper trees outside the French doors of our living and dining rooms have been a gathering place for birds. On rainy days I have counted as many as thirty robins at a time stuffing themselves with the red berries until I wondered how they could fly. Now and then a flock of silky, aristocratic waxwings would swoop down in a seemingly single motion. Some would hang head down eating the berries in this inverted manner, others would flutter delicately at them in mid-air, while a number would sit swaying on a bough, motionless for many minutes. Then at some unseen sign or signal the whole flock would rise from the trees and fly away as suddenly as it came.

When I put out crumbs there would often be ten or twenty golden-crowned and white-crowned sparrows dining with us. Towhees, of course, we always have hopping and scratching beneath our trees. In January and February the pert little Oregon juncos would join the sparrows, flying off with a flirt of their white-edged tails at any disturbance. As a contrast to these active little birds a pair of hermit thrushes would hop sedately along, paying no attention to either the sparrows or the towhees.

But by the middle of March most of our "pepper tree birds", as we call them, had left us. Days would go by without a single visitor to our trees, unless one counts the occasional blue jay which I chose to ignore. Then, on the twenty-ninth of March, a lone gray bird came to our trees. Now the branches of these pepper trees are only a few feet from our windows and it is possible to watch the birds closely without their seeing us. At first I thought this prim bird might be a fly-catcher, as it would sit quietly on a bough for two or three minutes at a time. But instead of flying into the air for insects it would flutter from its perch and attack the pepper berries on the wing in much the manner of a cedar waxwing.

I finally came upon the description of the Townsend's Solitaire (*Myadestes townsendi*) in my bird books, and the descriptions all fitted our solitary visitor; the dark gray back, the pearly gray breast and underparts, the faint white eye-ring, the buffish streaks on the back of the wings, and the narrow white margins to the tips and outer edges of the tail feathers. And just through the eyes the uniform gray of the back and head took on an almost blackish cast.

But still I could not believe it was my good fortune to see a Townsend's Solitaire. One authority stated in his book that he had seen the bird only once in Berkeley; and all of my books said that the shy and retiring Solitaire is usually found in mountainous regions. After questioning people who know about birds, and after watching my bird every day for a week, I was finally convinced that I was seeing a Townsend's Solitaire.

Until the eighth of April, which was the last day I saw him, he came to our pepper trees every morning between seven-thirty and eight. Often I would

not notice him at first as he would sit so quietly on a twig, his tail thrust down. Sometimes he would pull his head into his neck and ruffle his feathers, giving himself a puffy appearance. At other times he would pose superbly, his soft silky-looking gray feathers all in place, and his slender form extended to its full eight or nine inches.

Then, as if tired of being so quiet, he would make a little sortie from his perch to dart at the drying berries of the pepper trees. At these times I could see the buffy markings on his wings very plainly. This alternation of "deep thought" with berry eating made us think of an absent-minded person dining — someone, who, sitting in a brown study, suddenly realizes he is at the table, and hurriedly eats a few mouthfuls before returning to his inward ponderings.

After staying with us for forty-five minutes or an hour our Solitaire would disappear and not return until four or four-thirty in the afternoon. His supper would take him about as long as his breakfast and then he would disappear again. Occasionally we would see him for a few minutes around six-thirty tucking in his bed-time snack, or sitting very quietly silhouetted against the evening sun.

I always hoped to see two of the birds, but if our Solitaire had a mate nearby we were never lucky enough to catch a glimpse of her. I feel fortunate to have had the chance of watching one of these modest birds so closely for several days. Solitaire may mean something alone, a recluse; but I like to think of the Solitaire as one would think of a precious stone — alone because it needs no embellishments of companionship to add to its charm.

—Caroline Service, Berkeley, California.
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Adaptability

Among the many boom-towns which have suddenly found themselves grown out of their short pants is Vallejo, and some of its old-time inhabitants have had to adjust themselves to changes wrought by the war. This is true of birds as well as people. The area on the water-front facing Mare Island is a great field of cars, parked tier after tier, and the streets traversing the area are almost always jammed with moving cars. Nevertheless, during the first week of June this year, I saw a female Sparrow Hawk (*Falco sparverius*) catch an English sparrow on the street, not more than twelve feet from the car in which I was riding, and carry it to the top of one of the parked automobiles, where it stopped to adjust its struggling prey in its talons before flying to one of the telephone poles lining the street.

Unusual Location

Western Flycatchers (*Empidonax difficilis*) are prone to nest in a great variety of situations. On June 13th my attention was called to a nest in the garden of a Piedmont neighbor, which differed from any I have seen or known to be described. It was flush with the ground in a perfectly flat area in a carpet of dried leaves from the live oaks. The house had several rectangular areas forming right angles, and the nest was placed exactly in one of these right angles in the northwest corner. Three eggs were being incubated. Within forty-eight hours after the nest was discovered it was emptied and broken up, presumably by rats, as there is known to be a heavy infestation of these mammals on the property.

—T. Eric Reynolds, Piedmont, California
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JUNE FIELD TRIP

The June field trip was taken to Kentfield, Marin County, on the 14th, Mrs. Courtright acting as leader. Fog swept across the Golden Gate Bridge, but the day was perfect in Kentfield. We followed the road around the hill, reaching the Kent home at lunch-time, where a pleasant hour was spent. A few birders made a little side trip up the fire trail to a point from which a view of Phoenix Lake was obtained. This jaunt added the Black-throated Gray Warbler and Ash-throated Flycatcher to the list.

After enjoying the large old trees on the Kent grounds we went to the Junior College, where we had the thrill of the day. Here in a tall Monterey Pine we observed a pair of Audubon Warblers feeding young which appeared almost fully grown. By private automobiles we continued our birding to Ross, where we visited the grounds of Mr. and Mrs. T. T. Kent in the hope of seeing the Black-chinned Hummingbird. It was not there, and Mrs. Kent told us that she thought it had been seen in a neighbor's garden.

The list of forty-two species seen on this trip is as follows:

Turkey Vulture	Crow	Pileolated Warbler
Red-tailed Hawk	Chickadee	Brewer Blackbird
Quail	Plain Titmouse	Black-headed Grosbeak
Mourning Dove	Bush-tit	Lazuli Bunting
Anna Hummingbird	Wren-tit	Purple Finch
Allen Hummingbird	Bewick Wren	House Finch
Belted Kingfisher	Robin	Pine Siskin
California Woodpecker	Russet-backed Thrush	Willow Goldfinch
Ash-throated Flycatcher	Cassin Vireo	Green-backed Goldfinch
Western Flycatcher	Warbling Vireo	Spotted Towhees
Olive-sided Flycatcher	Lutescent Warbler	Junco
Violet-green Swallow	Yellow Warbler	Chipping Sparrow
Tree Swallow	Audubon Warbler	Song Sparrow
Cliff Swallow	Black-throated Gray	
California Jay	Warbler	

Members attending were Mr. and Mrs. Dunshee, Mr. and Mrs. Millard; Mesdames Austin, Courtright, Kelly, Richardson, Sheldon, and Smith; Misses Blake, Papina, Webb, and Young; and nine guests.

—Junea W. Kelly, Historian

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Audubon Warbler Nesting in Marin County

After seeing a pair of Audubon Warblers (*Dendroica auduboni auduboni*) feeding young in a tall Monterey Pine (*Pinus radiata*) on the grounds of the State Junior College at Kentfield on June 14, 1942, I thought it might prove of interest to gather data on the nesting of this species in the San Francisco Bay Region, as defined in the Pacific Coast Avifauna Number 18.

Condor, Vol. X, 1908, p. 133: J. Mailliard states that on a 1400-1600 ft. high ridge back of Fort Ross, Sonoma County, two or three miles from the ocean shore, Audubon Warblers were apparently breeding. Here the Douglas (*Pseudotsuga taxifolia*) grows. On May 11th both sexes were present and did not act like migrants.

Condor, Vol. XVII, 1915, p. 199: Louis B. Bishop in an article entitled "Summer Resident Land Birds of Monterey County", states that among the yellow pines on the summit of coastal slopes two pairs of Audubon Warblers were seen building nests.

Condor, Vol. XXXII, 1930, p. 51: Harold W. Clark in "Notes on the Avifauna of a Transition Island in Napa County", says that these warblers are abundant residents among the black oaks and partly open forests of the whole region.

Condor, Vol. XXXII, 1930, p. 306: Daniel Axelrod reported under field observations having seen young and adult Audubons at Lokoya, Napa County, on June 22, 1930. (Douglas and redwood grow in this locality. J.W.K.)

Condor, Vol. XXXIX, 1937, p. 38: Robert T. Orr states that from June 9 to July 21, 1936, Audubon Warblers were noted almost daily in the vicinity of Rock Springs on the western slope of Mt. Tamalpais. They were in the Douglas forest.

Condor, Vol. XL, 1938, p. 259: Emerson A. Stoner on May 29, 1938, found a nest with young in a slender white oak two miles north of Cordelia, Solano County.

Condor, Vol. XLIV, 1942, p. 69: Milton L. Seibert on June 1, 1941, found a pair feeding bob-tailed young in a place adjacent to Skyline Boulevard at the northern boundary of Sequoia Park, 1450 feet elevation, and a quarter of a mile west of the Contra Costa County line, in Alameda County. The area is covered with Monterey pine and cypress.

—Junea W. Kelly, Alameda, California, June 20, 1942

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Audubon Notes

July Meeting: The regular meeting will be held on Thursday, the 9th, at 8 p.m. in the Assembly Room, San Francisco Public Library, Larkin and McAllister Streets, San Francisco.

Mr. C. A. Harwell, California Representative of the National Audubon Society, will give an illustrated lecture on "Birds of the Desert".

Members may bring guests.

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July Field Trip will be taken on Sunday, the 12th, to the far end of Redwood Canyon (Oakland). This will probably be a somewhat strenuous trip, and for those used to walking. Take the "A" train at 7:30 a.m. from the San Francisco Terminal. Get transfer and take No. 18 car at First Ave. to end of line, going out Park Blvd. Then we will take the 8:57 Piedmont Pines bus (the only bus for that day) and get off at the end of the line; thence we will walk to point of destination. Bring field glasses and lunch. Leader to be appointed.

June Meeting: The 297th regular meeting was held on the 11th in the Assembly Room of the San Francisco Public Library. President Mrs. Harold C. Austin presided.

Dr. Robert C. Miller, Director of the California Academy of Sciences, gave a delightfully and humorously told account of his personal experiences in connection with the bird life of southern China, illustrated with slides of the habitat and of drawings of Chinese birds done by a native artist.

The following observations were reported.

Godwits (100 more or less) and a few Willets, Alameda, early June, Mrs. Junea W. Kelly.

Willetts, Mare Island, early June, Dr. T. Eric Reynolds.

Mr. Webb told of reports received by him that poison is superseding nets in the protection of cherries from birds in the valley orchards. Mr. Webb stated that he would take the matter up with the Fish and Game Commission, as it is in violation of the Fish and Game Code, section 1179.

Audubon Association of the Pacific

Organized January 25, 1917

For the Study and the Protection of Birds

President.....Mrs. Harold C. Austin.....541 Boulevard Way, Piedmont
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Monthly meeting second Thursday, 8 p.m.

Assembly Room, San Francisco Public Library, Larkin and McAllister Streets, San Francisco.

Membership dues, payable January 1st, \$3.00 per year.

Student memberships, \$1.50 per year.

Life memberships, \$50.00.

Members are responsible for dues until written notice of resignation is received by Treasurer.